people in eight rural East Tennessee counties. More than 2,000 high school students have received Reachout's AIDS/HIV education program

Ms. Freeman herself overcame great odds before helping improve rural health care for others in East Tennessee. Born in Puerto Rico, she has lived in Cocke County for the past 29 years. She earned an undergraduate degree in sociology in 1990, then went back to earn a Masters in health education in 1996. She even had to overcome her own illnesses stemming from a rare muscle condition.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when rural health care has been under direct assault from Washington, it is refreshing to see a private citizen take it upon herself to try to solve the problems she sees in her community. Ms. Freeman probably said it best when she said, "We believe in letting communities be the biggest part of the solution to addressing and solving their problems * * * I am committed to helping provide the tools to my community so it can help itself."

I agree completely, and I want to once again thank and congratulate Rosie Freeman for everything she has done to improve rural health care in East Tennessee. There is still much to do before rural health care receives the kind of attention it deserves, but with caring people like Ms. Freeman on the job, the situation looks a little brighter.

PRESERVING HEALTH CARE CHOICES FOR SENIORS

HON. MICHAEL BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, today, I am proud to introduce legislation that will help millions of Medicare beneficiaries whose health coverage is in jeopardy. My Florida colleague, PETER DEUTSCH, has joined me in sponsoring this bipartisan measure. Our bill—the "Medicare+Choice Risk Adjustment Aments of 1999"—will help to preserve and expand health care choices for seniors who participate in Medicare managed care plans.

The Medicare+Choice program was created as part of the 1997 Balanced Budget Act to increase health care options for Medicare beneficiaries. While the majority of beneficiaries remain in traditional fee-for-service Medicare, enrollment in managed care plans has grown rapidly in recent years. Many seniors now depend on the additional benefits (such as prescription drug coverage) available through plans under the Medicare+Choice program. However, a serious crisis threatens this vital program.

Last year, nearly 100 Medicare managed care plans did not renew their Medicare contracts or reduced their geographic areas of service. This year, many more plans have announced their intent to leave the Medicare+Choice program, raising serious concerns about its continued availability as an option for Medicare beneficiaries. Many plans cite inadequate reimbursement as a major factor in their decision.

Unless Congress takes action to correct this problem, the consequences will be devastating

for Medicare beneficiaries, especially low-income seniors. Many will lose the option of participating in a Medicare managed care plan altogether. Others will face increased out-ofpocket costs or a reduction in benefits.

This situation is largely due to a decision by the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) to disregard the intent of Congress in establishing the Medicare+Choice program. The 1997 Balanced Budget Act required HCFA to establish a process for "adjusting" Medicare+Choice payments based on the likelihood or the "risk" that enrollees will use health care services.

Congress anticipated that this new "risk adjustment" process would provide Medicare+Choice plans with higher payments for patients who are chronically ill and lower payments for those who are generally healthy. We did not intend to decrease overall Medicare+Choice spending through this process. Instead, we were simply trying to make sure that Medicare+Choice funds would be distributed based on the health status of Medicare+Choice enrollees.

However, HCFA has completely disregarded the intent of Congress on this critical issue. The agency is using its authority to establish a "risk adjustment" process as an excuse to try to impose deep spending cuts in the Medicare+Choice program. HCFA's ill-advised decision threatens to seriously underfund the Medicare+Choice program. Estimates indicate as much as \$11 billion may be drained from Medicare+Choice over the next five years, if HCFA is allowed to go forward with its plan.

At the time the 1997 Balanced Budget Act was considered, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated no savings from the risk adjuster. CBO's analysis assumed that the risk adjuster would simply shift funds within Medicare+Choice. By contrast, HCFA's approach would drain billions of dollars from the program.

The "Medicare+Choice Risk Adjustment Amendments of 1999" would address this problem in two ways. First, it would require HCFA to implement its risk adjustment process on a budget neutral basis—as Congress intended. Second, the bill would repeal a provision of current law that automatically requires the annual increase in Medicare fee-forservice payments.

Millions of seniors rely on Medicare+Choice for greater flexibility in meeting their health care needs. My legislation will help to stabilize this vital program and guarantee continued health care choices for Medicare beneficiaries. I urge my colleagues to join me in protecting seniors' health care choices by cosponsoring the "Medicare+Choice Risk Adjustment Amendments of 1999."

A TRIBUTE TO JOE VIVIAN

HON. HEATHER WILSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mrs. WILSON. Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring to your attention the 35 years of service Mr. Joe Vivian has given to our community of Albuquerque as a coach, mentor and leader.

Mr. Vivian coached wrestling for 35 years at six city high schools. He began his wrestling career in the eighth grade when a coach reached out to him and helped him turn his life around. Through his coaching Mr. Vivian mentored many young athletes. Mr. Vivian provided important lessons in staying physically fit, being part of a team, setting and achieving goals and community involvement. People who worked with Joe Vivian describe him as dedicated and committed to the wrestlers he worked with. He coached teams to three state titles and holds over 300 career dual victories.

In addition to coaching, Joe Vivian volunteers with Meals on Wheels, Special Olympics and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Mr. Joe Vivian retired from coaching this year. Please join me in thanking him for the positive influence he is in our community and wish him the best in retirement.

CLINTON HYPOCRISY ON LAND MINES

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 1, 1999

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, the Contra Costa Times, my hometown newspaper in the East Bay of San Francisco, got it right today when they took the President to task on the issue of land mines. "Hypocrisy on Land Mines," an editorial, points out that while President Clinton is now giving his compassion and his warnings of safety to returning Kosovar refugees because their homeland is wired full of land mines, it was the same President Clinton who refused to sign the international treaty to ban land mines two years ago. Over 100 other nations signed the treaty and the United States should have taken the lead to see this treaty enacted and enforced. Instead, all the United States can do now is hope that not too many Kosovar refugees have their limbs blown off as they venture home after the war.

Tens of thousands of civilians are killed by land mines around the world every year. The world needs America's leadership to bring an end to this cruel form of warfare where the main victims, in fact, are civilians. I commend the editorial below to my colleagues and to my President.

[From Contra Costa Times, July 1, 1999]
HYPOGRISY ON LAND MINES

President Clinton gave good advise when he warned Kosovar Albanians to delay their return to Kosovo because of the many land mines still scattered about the countryside and in towns. But there must have been much gnashing of teeth at the office of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, whose members watched two years ago as Clinton and the United States refused to sign a treaty that would have banned land mines around the world. Why they must have wondered is it all right for Angolan and Cambodian children to be exposed to these deadly weapons, but not Kosovars?

Clinton was in full "caring" mode as he spoke with refugees in Macedonia last week. "I know a lot of people are anxious to go